

September 8, 2007



An Interview With:

COACH KIRK FERENTZ

COACH FERENTZ: We're certainly very pleased to get the win tonight. A couple things, just happy to announce, it seems like Carl Jackson is fine. All of us had a little bit of a scare there. He got hit pretty hard on the sidelines, but he seems to be doing fine other than having a sore jaw. It looks like maybe he caught a helmet under the jaw. So we're happy about that.

Very appreciative of our fans. They were just outstanding today, and it's always fun to come into the stadium, even better tonight. A lot of gold when we came into the stadium a couple hours before the ballgame. When we came out for the toss, it was fantastic.

We're a work in progress as a football team right now, but the one thing we have done two weeks in a row, we've really showed up and played hard and played with intensity. So very, very pleased about that.

What we need to keep doing right now is trying to get better during the week, and hopefully that will show with each week, but everything starts with the effort, and I think our guys are playing hard and they're playing with toughness. So we need to keep that rolling and see what happens next week.

Q. How much of a confidence builder is it having a game like this for your team this early in the season?

COACH FERENTZ: I think some of the good things, our defense played very well for the second straight week. It starts up front. We've got a veteran group up there. We're counting on those guys to help set tempo, and I think they're doing a nice job there.

And then offensively, we looked like a different team tonight. They made it very difficult for us to run the football. Fortunately we had some things look a little bit better in the passing game. We caught the ball, threw it better, and having

Tony step up and do some things he did tonight was great to see.

Those are all positives. The kicking game is still a little bit of a hit-or-miss thing. We're doing some good things there and still have some things we have to clean up. We got off to a terrible start, illegal block on the kick return, missed a tackle on our kickoff coverage, and kick our first punt, and I don't think we made a 1st down with our first punt if you count it that way.

We got off to a tough start but then we came around and did some things better after that.

Q. For this team to get where you want it to get, how important was it that the passing game worked tonight?

COACH FERENTZ: You know, we're going to have to -- that's just how we play offensively. We're going to have to be able to do both, run with efficiency and throw the football, and I don't think there are many teams that are good enough to be one-dimensional. We certainly aren't. So we realize that, and I think we took a step forward in that regard.

And during the course of the season I think the numbers will balance out at the end of the year, but last week we ran the ball pretty proficiently, tonight we threw it a little better and really it comes down to doing whatever it takes in any given situation in given ballgames to be successful. But the way we play, we need to do both, so it was a positive certainly.

Q. Talk about Tony and his game tonight and what you saw out of him?

COACH FERENTZ: It's just our offense, but Tony is a guy that really has played well the last two years. We've had Scott Chandler here, too, which has overshadowed his performance a little bit. Now Tony is a little bit more the featured guy, if you will. It gives him a chance to play a little bit more prominent role, and as you can see he's a very talented player, he's got a great attitude, and it's good to see him have that kind of success, intangible success, out there. It'll do his confidence good. We're just happy to get guys involved. We need everybody to be involved if we're going to be to successful offensively.

Q. It looked like on that first touchdown that he got with the cover two and there was nobody was there with him. Is that something you guys noticed early on?

COACH FERENTZ: Yeah, in that situation they tend to play pretty aggressively. I thought Ken had a good plan there, made a good call. The play opened up for us like we hoped it would, and then Tony did a nice job finishing the play. He's got the ability to finish plays out there, so it's good to get it in his hands and see him taking possession, so that was great.

Q. With Seth playing the defense, it is about where you expected it to be in the second game?

COACH FERENTZ: We played hard. I just really like their energy level right now. They're practicing well, and they did all during camp and did in the spring, too. If we're going to have a chance this year to have a good football team, we're going to need those guys. It all starts with your veteran players. If they're playing -- veteran/experience. If they're playing well, everybody else -- things will fall into place. But it's tough to be successful if those guys aren't humming.

I think those guys are doing a good job, all four of those guys, and then you've got to include Humpal and Klinkenborg right behind them, two guys that have been around here a long time, real smart guys. And our corners, too, Charles and Adam Shada, have played a lot of football, so we're a little bit more veteran on that side of the ball, and we're really counting on those guys to help set tempo.

Q. You had a lot of tackles for loss. Was that just a facet of the guys overpowering the offensive line tonight?

COACH FERENTZ: It helps when the score tips your way a little bit. It makes it a little bit easier to I think crank it up up front. They're playing hard. Those guys are working hard. I thought they did the same thing last week, so it's just the general tempo that they're playing with our front four. As you know we're not a huge pressure team or blitz team, so if we have those guys, if they have it going, that certainly helps us play better defense.

One of the sacks for sure today was clearly a coverage sack, too, and I thought that happened last week where I thought we had good coverage down the field and forced the

quarterback to hold the ball a little bit. If they do that, then hopefully someone can land one.

Q. (Inaudible) in terms of his poise and ability?

COACH FERENTZ: Yeah, I thought his poise last week was real good. I thought he -- his demeanor out there, the way he operated, was good, just wasn't quite as accurate. He missed a couple throws today, a couple were high and that type of thing, but I thought he took a step forward certainly, and we counted on that. We expected that, and I think we'll see him take another step next week and the week after hopefully.

I keep going back to Drew Tate's first month on the job, and Brad Banks, the same way. Those two guys stand out in my mind. They had rough Septembers. I remember some peaks and valleys with both those guys. The longer it went, the better they got, too, and I think Jake is built that way, too, mentally; I think he'll keep improving.

Q. How much did he sit in the pocket, held on a little bit longer tonight, but Rob's development compared to last week?

COACH FERENTZ: I think it's fair, and I'm not sure the pocket was quite as clean this week as it was last week at times. It looked like we were a little sloppy up there. But we'll look at those films and check that out. But yeah, I thought he did a good job and made some plays with his feet, too.

Q. A couple of things you'd like to have cleaned up, but from a casual observer's point of view it looked like everything went right tonight. What's it like as a coach on the sideline when you have a game when it seems like things are going your way every time?

COACH FERENTZ: It's nice. It doesn't happen often. It's very nice.

Q. You have energy, you're always there. Is this a good time for this team?

COACH FERENTZ: I think so. We've had to work hard both games, and today by half things were going our way pretty well. But you know, then you always wonder, and we've all been through these, where you come out in the second half and just kind of play the second half and not really play it. But I thought our guys came back with the same intensity in the second half.

Right now they're thinking right that way, and certainly going on the road this week, we already know it's going to be a tough challenge for us. We'll start thinking about that more so

tomorrow afternoon with the team. Hopefully it's going to become a habit for us where we're ready to go each week, every time we tee it up.

Q. Right before the start of the season you had a lot of distractions and things involving the team. How were they able to kind of put it together the first two weeks and play two pretty solid games?

COACH FERENTZ: I think you deal with things that come your way the best you can. You know, you hope things don't come your way, but during the course of the season, that's just football, be it off-the-field injuries, there are always things that are going to happen, a call that you didn't think went your way that you thought maybe should have. That's parts of sports, part of life, and if you have the ability to deal with it, then move on and keep your focus where it needs to be, you have a better chance at being successful.

So far we're doing well. But it's only two -- we've only run two laps now. We've got ten more to go. But that being said, I'd rather have it this way. We're seeing some good signs, and I think our older guys are helping drive the car here. They're really pushing things.

Q. Being the record the way it is with Iowa State, does that change preparation at all? Maybe are you hungrier to get a win this week?

COACH FERENTZ: We'd expect that regardless. Any time we play those guys we expect a battle. It's been that way for eight years now that I've been involved since I've been back. We expect that, and our focus will be the same this week as any other week. We'll work on us getting better and then also trying to match up against an opponent. That will be the task at hand.

Q. Even though it's a non-conference game, how big of a morale boost is it to have the guys be supported so much in the first games?

COACH FERENTZ: I don't want to say that we -- we certainly don't take it for granted, but we're a little bit slow. I go back to my first year, we were 1 and 9, we got 52,000 people out there, which I haven't looked it up, I guess I've been thinking about other stuff. But I still think it's got to be a record. They've been good through tough and good times.

All we need to do, we need to reciprocate. That's our job, to go out there and play hard, and I think we owe that to our fans. But it's a great environment. We're very fortunate to play in this stadium. It's a great place to play. The reason it's

so good, it's a great building, but it's all about the people. The people that fill our stands, they're outstanding.

Q. The punt return going into the second quarter, kind of got you guys down into the red zone last week (inaudible).

COACH FERENTZ: It's been good. Andy has done a nice job punt returning. We saw him flash that ability last year, but he was banged up a little bit last year, too, so I think that cut back on it. But it takes everybody working hard. Our guys are doing a good job on the outside trying to block their coverage guys out, and then the guys in the interior, they're working hard, too, and they're blocking. In two weeks' time they've really done a nice job out there. They seem to have a lot of pride. And as we've seen both weeks, it can give you a heck of a spark as a football team. The way we're building, it's something we need to do. We need to do well in all areas.

Q. A lot of the players were downed by the defensive -- the way you played defensively. They ended up shut out. Can you talk about that a little bit?

COACH FERENTZ: Shutouts are good any time. They don't come around too often. I think all of us are probably more pleased just with the way the guys are playing. They're making it a challenge for the other team to get things established. Again, to me, it all starts in the interior. If you can do a good job there, then it gives you a little bit of a chance to have some success.

We've got guys that have played, so we expect them to play well, and they're living up to their end of the bargain. But it starts at practice. They're practicing real well, and it's carrying onto the game field, so it's a great thing to see.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports....

Syracuse at Iowa, Sept. 8, 2007
IOWA PLAYER QUOTES

Sophomore Jake Christensen:

“It was a big win for us. Being a home opener and Syracuse played us tough last year, we wanted to try come out and play our best and that is what we did.”

“We knew we would get the chance to throw the ball around a little bit and we just took advantage. Tony did a great job catching the ball and the offensive line made plays. I had all day back there and the credit goes to them.”

“I’ve been thinking about Iowa State already, it is a huge game for us. Last time we went up there they gave it to us pretty good. The focus has shifted to that already.”

Senior Kenny Iwebema:

“We played good last week. Especially for a game on the road and it was the first game of the season. We had a lot of ups-and-downs and we played through them. We really stayed focused.”

“It was good to give some of those young guys experience out there today. It was good to see them do good things out there.”

Senior Albert Young:

“We have been giving high effort and it has been showing. We want to stay consistent with that and if that stays consistent throughout the team then we will be in good shape.”

“Jake had a good time back there today, he got to pass the ball. It was definitely tough today for them because we had a lot of time in the box.”

Senior Bryan Mattison:

(On winning)

“It feels good, anytime you can win and win at home like that, it’s great. We have to give credit to Syracuse, they are a good team, well coached, they are going to win games this year. We just came ready to play.”

(On three sacks)

“It feels good, but at the same time I’m getting the sack because the quarterback can’t step up in the pocket because the guys on the inside are doing their job. It’s truly a total defense thing.”

“I’m glad our defense did better. We still have a long way to go, a lot of room to improve. We are just glad to get the win.”

“Any time you win it’s a confidence builder. We are going to go in and watch film tomorrow. And after the film we will probably be like ‘wow we didn’t play that great.’ But that’s the way it goes and we are just excited to get the win.”

Junior Tony Moeaki:

(On the game)

“Before every game you just want to play your best. You always want to get two hundred yards if you can. I was just trying to help our team win and it just so happened that the play calls were open and that’s all it really was.”

(On reaching the end zone)

“It was good, it was exciting. Kinnick was exciting tonight, the atmosphere was great and I felt good, real good.”

(On defense)

“Our defense was awesome, it was unreal. It was just a team effort it was a good team win, it was nice.”

Senior Damian Sims:

(On passing game)

“We showed that team and everybody else that we can throw the ball.”

(On Syracuse defense)

“Iowa State is going to come in and play the same kind of defense and there will be a lot of points put up when we have a throwing game.”

(On passing and running game combined)

“That’s how it should be, when they want to put a lot of guys in the box, we help them out and they will do the same for us. We will throw the ball and when they put two safeties back, we should be able to run the ball on them.”